

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SEOUL 05588 281008Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1948

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5588

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLOS, MOPS, KS, KN, US

SUBJECT: NORTH/SOUTH KOREAN BOAT INCIDENT IN YELLOW SEA

1. NORTH KOREAN FISHING BOAT WAS CAPSIZED IN THE YELLOW SEA
JUNE 27 IN AN ENCOUNTER WITH A ROK NAVY (ROKN) PATROL BOAT.
SURVIVING CREW WERE PICKED UP AND ARE IN ROKN CUSTODY.

2. BY ROKG ACCOUNT, ROKN RADARS ON P.Y.DO (ISLAND) AT
APPROXIMATELY 1810 JUNE 27, LOCAL TIME, BEGAN TRACKING ONE
OR MORE UNIDENTIFIED VESSELS MOVING SOUTHWARD FROM A POINT
JUST NORTH OF THE NAUTICAL LIMITATION LINE (NLL). THE
SIGHTINGS WERE INTERPRETED AS A FISHING BOAT FOLLOWED BY
TWO NK NAVAL PATROL CRAFT.

3. WHEN THE FISHERMAN HAD CROSSED THE LINE AND CONTINUED
SOUTHWARD TO WITHIN 1000 YARDS OF P.Y.DO, A ROKN DESTROYER
AND TWO PATROL BOATS WERE DIRECTED TO INTERCEPT IT. THE
TWO PURSUING NK PATROL CRAFT BACKED OFF AND RETURNED NORTHWARD
AFTER DESTROYER FIRED A SHOT ACROSS THEIR BOWS.

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 05588 281008Z

4. FISHING BOAT COLLIDED WITH ROKN PATROL BOAT,
CAPSIZED AND SANK DURING BOARDING ATTEMPT IN ROUGH
SEAS AND HEAVY FOG. FIVE SURVIVORS WERE RESCUED.
ROK PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT PLACES SINKING NEAR PAEKYONG
ISLAND, 4-5 MI. SOUTH OF THE NAUTICAL LIMIT LINE.

5. TWO NK PATROL CRAFT MEANTIME ATTEMPTED TO RETURN TO

THE SCENE, BUT AFTER AN INEFFECTUAL EXCHANGE OF FIRE
THEY AGAIN RETURNED NORTH.

6. ROK PRESS DESCRIBES THE BOAT ONLY AS A 30-TON FISHER-
MAN, WHILE INITIAL NK COMMUNIQUE CALLS IT ANGLE FISHING
NET BOAT NO. 512 OF THE NAMPO FISHERY STATION, OPERATING
UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AN UNIDENTIFIED COMMAND SHIP.

7. BY BOTH SIDES' BORADCAST ACCOUNTS, THE BOAT WAS
FLEEING NORTHWARD WHEN IT WAS INTERCEPTED. BEYOND THAT,
THE NORTH TREATS THIS AS A REPLAY OF THE MAY 19 INCIDENT:
THEY ADMIT THEIR BOAT "WAS ASTRAY", MAKE NO MENTION OF
THEIR PATROL CRAFT OR OF THE LATTER'S FIRING, AND
CLAIM THEIR BOAT SANK AFTER ROKN UNITS FIRED ON IT
WITHOUT PROVOCATION. THEY DENOUNCE THE ACT AS PIRACY
AND DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE RETURN OF SIX FISHERMEN.

8. UNLIKE THE MAY 19 INCIDENT, IN WHICH THE NK BOAT
REPORTEDLY FIRED FIRST, ROKN EVIDENTLY DID MAKE
AN NONVIOLENT INTERCEPTION AND THE SINKING RESULTED
FROM SHIPHANDLING RATHER THAN GUNFIRE.

9. THE KPA SIDE OF THE MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSION
(MAC) HAS FORMALLY PROTESTED THE INCIDENT AND HAS
REQUESTED A MAC MEETING FOR 1100 ON JUNE 29. OUR SIDE
HAS NOT YET COUNTERPROPOSED.
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PAGE 03 SEOUL 05588 281008Z

10. COMMENT: WEHAD ORIGINALLY HOPED TO PROPOSE
SECRETARIES MEETING PRIOR TO ANY CALL BY THE NORTH
FOR A MEETING. ROK INABILITY TO AGREE QUICKLY TO THIS
PROPOSAL RESULTED IN OUR LOSS OF INITIATIVE. WE ARE
NOW URGING EARLIEST POSSIBLE RETURN OF FISHERMAN.
RETURN WILL PROBABLY OCCUR THROUGH MAC CHANNEL, AT
THE SECRETARY LEVEL. AS IN THE CASE OF THE RETURNEES

OF THE MAY 19 INCIDENT.
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NNN

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